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### Editors' introduction: neoliberalism and/as terror

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## EDITORIAL

### Editors' introduction: neoliberalism and/as terror

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The articles in this special issue are drawn from papers presented at a conference entitled “Neoliberalism and/as Terror”, held at the Nottingham Conference Centre at Nottingham Trent University by the Critical Terrorism Studies BISA Working Group (CSTWG) on 15–16 September 2014. The conference was supported by both a BISA workshop grant and supplementary funds from Nottingham Trent University’s Politics and International Relations Department and the *Critical Studies on Terrorism* journal. Papers presented at the conference aimed to extend research into the diverse linkages between neoliberalism and terrorism, including but extending beyond the contextualisation of pre-emptive counterterrorism technologies and privatised securities within relevant economic and ideological contexts. Thus, the conference sought also to stimulate research into the ways that neoliberalism could itself be understood as terrorism, asking – amongst other questions – whether populations are themselves terrorised by neoliberal policy. The articles presented in this special issue reflect the conference aims in bringing together research on the neoliberalisation of counterterrorism and on the terror of neoliberalism.

**Keywords:** neoliberalism; liberalism; terror; terrorism; counterterrorism; political violence; protest

### Introduction

How should we understand or make sense of terror? It has long been a commitment of critical terrorism studies to challenge the reductive association of “terrorism” with non-state actors: a challenge with considerable potential for unsettling established assumptions within terrorism research and International Relations (IR) more broadly (Jarvis and Lister 2014). Research in this area has, as a consequence, produced significant literatures pushing for the broader recognition of state terrorism (Blakeley 2007; Jackson, Murphy, and Poynting 2010) and the reconceptualisation of terrorism as a discursive tool rather than objective category (Croft 2006; Jackson 2005; Mythen and Walklate 2006). While these efforts to (re-)think and even (re-)appropriate the “terrorism” signifier have produced important critiques of the mainstream terror discourse, the critical literature itself occasionally falls into standardised tropes. One such trope is the unidirectional exploration of the relationship between neoliberalism and terror, a research area to which this special issue attempts to offer redirection.

Since the onset of the War on Terror, various critical literatures in International Relations have identified neoliberal economic trends as integral to counterterrorism frameworks and techniques.<sup>1</sup> The extensive literatures on the deployment of risk through

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security, for example, identify the application of actuarial tools drawn from the market (especially insurance) to issues of political violence, tracing their subsequent development into speculative tools of contingency management (Amoore and De Goede 2008; Heng and McDonagh 2009; Lobo-Guerrero 2012; Vedby Rasmussen 2004). Here, insecurity is tamed through its rendering as manageable, predictable risk precisely by the application of economic technologies to various fields of security. It is worth noting, as well, that the significant literatures on governmentality as practiced through counterterrorism (Aradau and Van Munster 2007; Mythen and Walklate 2006) are also readings of the application of neoliberal economics to security, given Foucault's derivation of governmentality as a step within the broad economisation of society. Finally, other nodes within critical literatures on the intersection between neoliberalism and counterterrorism focus on the ascendance of private companies within security spheres (Hoijsink 2014), such as border management, which used to be the sole domain of the state – and the resulting extension of a two-tier system in the management of global mobilities (Amoore 2006; Sparke 2006).

However, despite these important considerations of neoliberalism and counterterrorism, some features of the intersection between economics and terrorism remain side-lined and under-analysed. In this special issue, we are pleased to offer explorations of the connections between neoliberalism and terror, which include, but also extend beyond, the approaches outlined above. As such, we consider this special issue to be a step toward a broader conceptualisation of neoliberalism and/as terror. To this end, this special issue explores two broad and intersecting themes – neoliberalism *as* terror and neoliberal effects upon the production of terrorism discourse and technologies.

We begin by explaining what we mean by the term neoliberalism and then move on to consider two bodies of literature that have dealt with the connections between neoliberalism and terror before identifying a number of gaps in this field of research that we argue the research in this issue seeks to address. In terms of defining the concept of “neoliberalism”, David Harvey (2005, 2) contends that neoliberalism can be understood as a theory drawn from political economy that proposes human well-being as best advanced through an institutional framework characterised by “private property rights, free markets... and free trade”. The role of the state in neoliberal economic theory is limited, with the main purpose for its existence to create and preserve a set of institutional practices that ensure the primacy of the free market over other forms of social, political and economic organisation. As Stuart Hall, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin (2013, 5) explain, neoliberalism demands “low tax regimes, limited state interference, and unimpeded access to markets and vital resources”. As a political philosophy, neoliberalism emphasises profit-making as the essence of democracy and consumption as the most operable form of citizenship (Di Leo et al. 2012). It demands the creation of markets (i.e. privatisation) in areas of the economy once solely the preserve of the state (land, water, health, education and all fields of security). However, it purports that once those markets have been created, state intervention and regulation of those markets should be minimal (Harvey 2005). Since the 1970s, neoliberal policies have become ever more common place, with neoliberalism representing the dominant economic model embraced by Western states and global financial institutions at the turn of the twenty-first century.

This embrace of neoliberalism has led to the development of societies where political influence has been captured by corporate actors. According to Susan George (1999), it has led to growing inequality, with neoliberalism having precipitated a massive transfer of wealth, power and resources from the poorest in society to the richest.<sup>2</sup> As Hall, Massey, and Rustin (2013, 4) explain, “it has encouraged private capital to hollow-out the welfare state and dismantle... structures of health, welfare and education services” in the pursuit

of profit. In essence, neoliberalism generates winners and losers, with the richest in society gaining to the detriment of the poorest. This is important if we consider the neoliberal definition of “loser”, to whom nothing is owed. As George (1999, para 30) notes, “anyone can be ejected from the system at any time – because of illness, age, pregnancy, perceived failure, or simply because economic circumstances and the relentless transfer of wealth from top to bottom demand it”. Indeed, neoliberalism has fundamentally altered politics in the sense that:

Politics used to be primarily about who ruled whom and who got what share of the pie. Aspects of both these central questions remain, of course, but the great new central question of politics is... “Who has a right to live and who does not?” Radical exclusion is now the order of the day. (George 1999, para 32)

George’s observation resonates here in the sense that she points to a gap in the literature that this issue aims to address: the extent to which the economic theory of neoliberalism can be understood as a form of terror.

First, with regard to the idea of the economic theory of “neoliberalism as terror” there is a small body of research that has been conducted under the guise of cultural studies by the critical theorist Henry Giroux (2004, 2005). Focusing specifically on the United States (US), Giroux draws our attention to the ways in which neoliberalism has transformed how the state provides internal and external security for its citizens. For Giroux, neoliberalism not only creates economic terror for citizens deemed losers in the neoliberal society (through the hollowing out of the welfare state and the removal of economic support), but is responsible for a growing form of political terror, or authoritarianism, that is characterised by the militarisation of public space at home and the suppression of dissent. He argues that:

Neoliberalism has become complicitous with this transformation of the democratic state into a national security state that repeatedly uses its military and political power to develop a daunting police state... to punish workers, stifle dissent, and undermine the political power of labour’ unions and progressive social movements. (Giroux 2005, 8)

Indeed, recent and seemingly disparate events, such as the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in the United States or the policing of student protest at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom, reflect forms of neoliberal terror in the sense that they are made possible by a political culture, which is based on fear, surveillance and control rather than one based on “a vibrant culture of shared responsibility and critical questioning” (Giroux 2005, 4).

In the first half of the special issue, we include contributions from established and early career scholars, which break new ground in relation to the ontological relationship between neoliberalism and terror, albeit in different ways. These articles go beyond existing security studies literature on security privatisation and the importance of risk governance. They probe the very archetype of the terrorist and its relation to more surprising *bête noirs* such as Satan and the figure of the zombie which, it is argued, has always haunted the development of capitalism (Neocleous 2015, this issue). In a related vein, Jackson (2015, this issue) charts the epistemological crisis of counterterrorism which drives the War on Terror security project but simultaneously renders it unending, redundant and hysterical, while other contributors turn to the role of crisis, and especially the contemporary counterterrorist response, in enabling the perpetual reconfiguration of accumulation and capitalism (neatly summarised as the “Class War on Terror”) (Boukalas 2015, this issue). Looking beyond the

global North, Furtado turns to the terror discourse of South America in which terrorism is predominantly associated with state rather than non-state actors: an association that cannot be understood but for the brutal expansion of neoliberal economics under authoritarian rule (Furtado 2015, this issue). In these articles, we see how the economic machine of capitalism invents and necessitates the figure of the “Universal Adversary” (be that the pig, Satan, the zombie or the terrorist) so that it can refigure itself around crises, concealing its ambiguities. Furthermore, from alternate directions, we see how this perpetual project is driven by a paranoid logic that has led to an epistemological crisis – at least in the global North.

In the second half of the issue, we turn to the effects of neoliberal ideology and economics upon counterterrorism, and vice versa. The questions asked within this section probe the ways in which the contemporary economic and ideological era has impacted the practice of security, including how the deployment of futurity and fantasy within security discourse has radically redefined fear, such that counterterrorism perpetually tells us that each attack precedes something worse. In this imaginary, we are no longer scared of something definable like an explosion but the kaleidoscopic anticipatory fixation on even worse to come. We have become frightened of fear itself, and counterterrorism practice plays a central role in creating the fear which terrorism supposedly induces (Frank 2015, this issue).

Addressing the paradoxical effects of neoliberalism upon counterterrorism from a different direction, Marijn Hoijtink considers the professional security culture which has emerged around counterterrorism – one which centralises infrastructural systems rather than people – as objects of protection (Hoijtink 2015, this issue). People seem to have been displaced as that which must be protected by counterterrorism, in favour of systemised notions of mobility which Hoijtink shows are crucial to neoliberalism, but they are not entirely absent. For example, Mohammed Elshimi’s article explores the ways in which the neoliberal state remains fascinated with intervention into people’s lives, especially those identified as risky, dangerous and radicalised. Building upon work into the governmentality of radicalisation policies, Elshimi explores how *deradicalisation* programs function through both anticipatory (neoliberal) logics of detection, but also pastoral logics of care. The utilisation of confessional technologies therein, in particular, speaks to the re-emergence of pastoral techniques whereby the state deploys deradicalisation as a technology of the self, and of salvation (Elshimi 2015, this issue).

Finally, reversing the direction of analysis, and assessing the impact of counterterrorism upon neoliberalism, it is important to assess the ways in which entertainment and other industries take the neoliberal security era as an object for commodification and popular consumption. As such, Robert Young (2015, this issue) explores representations of war within the video game *Splinter Cell*, demonstrating that “older” (pre-War on Terror) understandings of Just War have become increasingly blurred – rather than abandoned – in a liminal space composed of “new” warfare of special-ops teams and enhanced interrogation – all for a market of consumers.

Following this section on neoliberal effects upon counterterrorism, this special issue turns finally to the lived experiences of neoliberal subjects and what this might tell us about counterterrorism and its regulation. James Fitzgerald offers an autoethnographic narrative account of his bizarre experiences with border control professionals at Heathrow airport (Fitzgerald 2015, this issue). The experience he takes from this encounter is that, while there are many bad lists, on which we would not want to appear, there may also be “good lists” – whose occupants are deemed sufficiently responsible to carry books on terrorism and resist the powers of “radicalisation”. This is followed by Asim Qureshi,

research director at CAGE, who provides a practitioner account of the British legal system and its often grossly unfair dealings with terror suspects (Qureshi 2015, this issue).

Throughout these articles, a sense of vertigo progressively builds with respect to the disastrous relationship between neoliberalism and counterterrorism. We agree with Hall, Massey and Rustin's assertion that the theory of neoliberalism "plays a crucial role in legitimising the restoration and reinvigoration of a regime of power, profit and privilege" (Hall, Massey, and Rustin 2013, 9). The purpose of this issue is to expose the ways in which the neoliberal regime of power functions and offer suggestions for how we might resist and challenge its negative impact on societies across the world. The prominent paradoxes, epistemological crises and cruel, unjustified or simply curious exclusions of neoliberalism and/as terror are exposed from multiple directions by the contributors, providing a platform for the radical extension of critical exploration. Since its inception, the Critical Studies on Terrorism project has provided a space for critical and dissenting engagements with the politics of (counter)terrorism. This has included, *inter alia*, problematising the production of "expert" knowledge in Terrorism Studies; deconstructing and challenging dominant counterterrorism practices; exploring experiences of counterterrorism at different levels of the socio-political; and facilitating connections with cognate research fields, including Peace Research and Gender Studies. Building on these interventions, this special issue seeks to engage with the political, social and economic implications of current conceptualisations and practices of terrorism and the concurrent theme of neoliberalism as terror.

### **Keynote addresses on neoliberalism as terror: epistemological crises and capitalist histories of counterterrorism**

The keynote addresses presented in this special issue by Mark Neocleous and Richard Jackson are concerned with the role of contemporary security discourses in strengthening the Western neoliberal order, with a particular focus on the way in which these discourses constitute an enemy (the "Universal Adversary", the "terrorist") that necessitates some type of counter-response. Both articles are connected by a belief that contemporary security strategies, and counterterrorism policies in particular, derive their legitimacy from or are based upon forms of knowledge that are structured around uncertainty, ambiguity, imagination and fantasy. Neocleous and Jackson both acknowledge the unexpectedly prescient thoughts of Donald Rumsfeld, when he spoke of known knowns, known unknowns and unknown unknowns, in highlighting what has become the central concern of the state in terms of its security logic: anxiety, fear and foreboding over the possible threats of the future. In this sense, they speak to the arguments of Louise Amoore and Marieke de Goede (2008, 24), who contend that the War on Terror has given way to "new rationalities of government that require that the catastrophic prospects of the future be tamed and managed". The articles by Neocleous and Jackson both highlight the importance of the discursive construction of "the enemy", be it the "terrorist" or the "Universal Adversary", as a central element of this.

Mark Neocleous' article centres upon a category of enemy, the "Universal Adversary", which he argues emerged from the War on Terror as the new preoccupation of the national security state.<sup>3</sup> He takes as his focus the new paradigm of "national preparedness" and state-based emergency planning for all manner of security contingencies, from natural disasters to terrorist attacks, which consist of imagined disaster scenarios that inevitably involve the fictitious enemy the "Universal Adversary". However, this new paradigm of "national preparedness" not only requires that the state imagine the disasters of the future (and



develop responses to them), it also obliges citizens to be wary of and prepared for surviving potential attacks or catastrophes. This line of argument about the logic that underpins Western security practice is reflected in recent events such as the introduction, in November 2014, in the United Kingdom (UK) of “Counter-Terrorism Awareness Week” (UK Government 2014). Not only is terrorism a “real” threat in this context, but citizens must always remain vigilant, resilient and continually *aware* of that threat. Although emergency planning includes contingencies for natural disasters, Neocleous contends that in most scenarios the “Universal Adversary” is represented by the figure of the terrorist. For Neocleous, this means that there is only one certainty in the minds of politicians, policy-makers and security practitioners: the “Universal Adversary” will attack.

Neocleous argues that we should take seriously the figure of the “Universal Adversary” for three main reasons. First, he argues that the category of the “Universal Adversary” can act as a vehicle through which to explore class conflict in neoliberal societies. For example, he draws our attention to the use of certain terms and phrases in emergency planning documents, such as the phrase “disgruntled workers”. He highlights the etymology and use of such phrases in the context of the War on Terror to offer a convincing argument for understanding their use as representative of the bourgeois fear of the “enemy within”, hence re-reading the practices of the War on Terror as a continuation of class conflict. Second, he argues that the War on Terror and the logic of emergency powers, which are legitimised through the discursive construction of threats such as the “Universal Adversary”, should involve a discussion of capital and class, by which he means connecting the War on Terror with class conflict, rather than a discussion of emergency powers as a “state of exception” (contra Agamben). Third, he also offers a speculative commentary on the notion of the “Universal Adversary” as a contemporary representation of an old idea in elite or bourgeois thinking, notably the universality of “the enemy”.

Where the focus of Neocleous’ article revolves around the construction of threat with specific reference to the figure of the “Universal Adversary”, Jackson’s article concerns itself with illuminating the epistemological crisis at the heart of contemporary Western counterterrorism. For Jackson, there are two key facets to this crisis that are mutually constitutive. First, there is the discursive construction of the figure of “the terrorist” as a particular type of enemy. This can be identified in the language used by politicians, policy-makers, security practitioners and academics to talk about and define the threat of terrorism. Jackson argues that this contemporary Western understanding of terrorism is characterised by a paranoid logic that over-exaggerates the threat posed by terrorism. Second, there is the counter-response to the threat, understood by Jackson as a way of acting towards the preconceived notion of the terrorist threat and conditioned by the same paranoid logic which has made possible a whole range of security practices that include pre-emptive war, extra-judicial killings, mass surveillance and torture. For Jackson, the “epistemological crisis of counter-terrorism” is captured neatly by the fact that although no evidence exists to demonstrate that these practices are effective (e.g., they make the states that implement them safer from terrorism), these security practices are now seen as logical responses to the threat from terrorism.

In fact, Jackson argues that all available evidence suggests that practices of pre-emptive war, extra-judicial killings, mass surveillance and torture are more likely to reduce the safety of any state that implements such policies. To get at this apparent paradox, Jackson draws our attention to four key aspects of the epistemological crisis of counterterrorism that structure his analysis. First, he notes the tendency of those working in the field of security to reject previous knowledge about terrorism. This rejection of knowledge taps into and is based on the rather suspect assertion that contemporary forms



of terrorism are somehow “new” and different from the “old” terrorism of the past (Laqueur 1999; Duyvesteyn 2004; Crenshaw 2011). Second, there is an acceptance of an extreme precautionary dogma whereby unknown (or constructed) threats are acted upon pre-emptively before they actualise. This flows into the third point, which is that the threats identified (or constructed) as threats are largely based upon imagination and fantasy. Fourth, the epistemological crisis is characterised by a “permanent ontological condition of ‘waiting for terror’... in relation to the next attack” (see Jackson 2015, this issue). Jackson draws his analysis to a close by offering a number of ways in which critical scholars can and should attempt to resist the paranoid logic of contemporary Western counterterrorism policy.

### Neoliberalism as terror?

Following the keynote addresses, two articles within this special issue make bold contributions to the discussion of neoliberalism as terror – identifying, in different contexts, the important connections and overlaps between the two. Given that our conference focused upon the practice of counterterrorism, we undertake this task within the security sphere, rather than other areas of social policy. The section begins with articles by Christos Boukalas and Henrique Furtado. Boukalas provides a thought-provoking and innovative discussion of the economic functionality of homeland security reforms in the United States, reflecting upon the War on Terror as class war. He proclaims that we can understand counterterrorism through the Marxist conception of class, gaining new insights into its practice and mandate. Subsequently, in the context of South America, the terrain for an earlier era of American counterterrorism, Henrique Furtado approaches overlap between the neoliberal/ising state and terrorism from a very different direction. His article explores the fascinating discursive climate whereby the assumptions of the Global North’s terror discourse and, it must be said, much work within Critical Terrorism Studies are reversed and “terrorism” popularly signifies state repression, with counterterrorism signifying non-state revolutionary action.

How should we consider these contributions? First, Boukalas invites us to stray from the beaten path of terrorism studies – critical and traditional. What would happen to counterterrorism analysis if we did not start with the state and instead began with the Marxist conceptualisation of social/economic dynamics, whereby the state is a particular historical formation of relations between classes? If the state is a machine which protects accumulation on behalf of dominant classes, then we can begin to address counterterrorism as a technique for the protection of accumulation. Using the work of social theorist Poulantzas (1979) on the nature of economic and political crisis, Boukalas argues that economic crisis is relatively normalised for the state. Antagonisms and sudden market fluctuations are the natural state of capitalism. However, *political* crisis is treated as an extremely serious consideration in that it embodies the potential to end capitalist rule. Counterterrorism becomes functional here as the way in which the capitalist state rearranges structures to manage economic crises, while preventing and suppressing the emergence of political crisis.

If Boukalas’ contention was only meant as a comparison or metaphorical critique making use of a reading of counterterrorism through the lens of class, it would already make a significant contribution to the literature on Critical Terrorism Studies. However, Boukalas is not experimenting with a new way of reading counterterrorism: he is deadly serious that counterterrorism has been connected to economic restructuring and the simultaneous repression of political crisis since its inception. His bold critique of

neoliberalism and counterterrorism goes even further, opening potential future directions in research. The article progresses through a detailed reading of the Homeland Security architecture in the United States, situating the economic and repressive functions of this enormous security project within the context of class war. He argues that, given financial turbulence of the 1990s and the accompanying growth of the anti-globalisation movement (and, it might be added, the sudden absence of a Cold War frame with which to sublimate all antagonisms), neoliberalism was facing mounting systemic challenges. What, to paraphrase Lenin, is to be done? Boukalas argues that 9/11 proved extremely useful as the crisis point around which the protection of accumulation for the capitalist elite could be undertaken, while directing the attention of the public at an external enemy. The capitalism promoted by George Bush and his establishment skilfully embraced 9/11, moving the US economy towards a new model of accumulation specifically involving the generation and resolution of crisis through the reification and commodification of security. In his words:

The most obvious state intervention in capital accumulation through counterterrorism policy was the construction of a peculiar sector of the economy: the homeland security sector. This sector did not develop around a new kind of produce, but comprises the efforts of existing sectors – from armaments to pharmaceuticals, from finance to the ever agile (and recently bankrupt) IT – to adjust or merely rebrand their produce as security-related. (Boukalas 2015, this issue)

The War on Terror provided the frame through which the excesses of neoliberal economic policy were extended through the Homeland Security model. This is a fascinating contribution to the theorisation of counterterrorism and economy, one which will hopefully provoke much debate and further inquiry.

In a completely different context, the winner of the 2014 Graduate Paper Award for *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, Henrique Furtado, considers the neoliberal and fascist regimes of South America and their intrinsic connections to (counter)terrorism. His major contribution is to expose the myopias of traditional and critical research alike, such that both associate terrorism with non-state actors – ignoring the reversed discourse which stems from the South American continent. Critical Terrorism Studies has made a prominent attempt to challenge the reductionist association of terrorism with non-state actors in the policies/academies of the Global North by arguing for the recognition of *state* terrorism (Blakeley 2007; Jackson, Murphy, and Poynting 2010). By virtue of doing so, Furtado argues that the signifier “terrorism” still presents a hegemonic association with non-state actors because it lacks the precursor “state”.

This is not simply a word game. Furtado makes a timely argument about the repeated assertions of resistance within critical work, in terrorism and more generally. What, specifically, does it mean to resist? In resisting the association of terrorism with non-state actors, Critical Terrorism Studies has accidentally contributed to the reaffirming of this association. To explore the question further, Furtado extensively addresses the fascinating histories of popular resistance to neoliberal authoritarianism in South America. In a reversal of the Global North’s discourse, here we find that “terrorism” is primarily used to signify the actions of the repressive state. In the resistant utilisation of memory, Brazilian discourse associates the military perpetrators of atrocity with gorillas (who must remain caged) and with psychopaths who enjoyed causing pain.

But what comes of this resistance through memory? In a compelling critique of the counter-memory field (Hite 2012; Legg 2005) and one-dimensional assertions of the value

of resistance across critical academia, Furtado shows how the performance of resistance deploys its own power and its own silences (see also Heath-Kelly 2013a). What we see is nothing more than the inversion of the War on Terror rhetoric. And how much resistance can be found there? Furtado convincingly shows in his award winning paper that both discourses rely upon a simplistic dehumanisation of terrorists – whether they are government forces or non-state actors. In such a discourse, there is no room for complexity, nuance or debate. So much for resistance.

### Neoliberal effects on counterterrorism

In the second section of our special issue, we present articles which take a more conventional approach to the questions of neoliberalism and terror, presenting each as a discrete phenomenon which can affect the other – contra previous explorations of neoliberalism *as* terror. This section contains analyses of contemporary counterterrorism in the neoliberal era, exploring the deployment of futurity and fear, Foucauldian technologies of the self, privatisation and transport security, and the transformation of the War on Terror into commodified entertainment.

Michael Frank begins the discussion with his article, “Conjuring up the Next Attack: The Future-Orientedness of Terror and the Counterterrorist Imagination”. While we often take for granted that terrorism functions through the creation of fear, Frank explores the nature of this anxiety as it is discursively constructed by policymakers and commentators. He discovers a peculiar and seemingly paradoxical dynamic within the terror/counterterrorism relationship, whereby terrorism could not be successful in generating fear without the input of counterterrorism. Fear is always concerned with the anticipated yet unknown event, rather than that which is regular or familiar. Frank skilfully shows how counterterrorism constitutes fear through its imagination of the “next attack”, how every event is discursively constructed as bearing the promise of worse atrocities to come. The counterterrorist project necessarily, yet paradoxically, aids that which it opposes. And here our attention is drawn back to Christos Boukalas’ account of counterterrorism as class war, where the state utilises moments of crisis to undertake its structural and economic reforms which might not pass during stable periods. How sure are we that the counterterrorist project has the objective to end terrorism? And how useful is the figure of the “Universal Adversary” in maintaining relations of international politics and economy to serve the interests of the powerful?

While many seminal texts address the functionality of the enemy and the other (Campbell 1992; Said 1978), these considerations are often studied at the global level – exploring the identity politics at national and international levels. Mohammed Elshimi’s article, however, takes us on a journey through the micropolitics of identity in the neoliberal era. And in this modern era, we find the surprising resurgence of confessional technologies of old, redeployed in the effort to moderate and control subjectivity in the War on Terror. Elshimi’s article focuses on the growth of deradicalisation initiatives in contemporary counterterrorism. Situated within the “Prevent” strand of the UK’s CONTEST strategy, deradicalisation programmes such as the police-run Channel project seek to arrest the risk of terrorism before it occurs by transforming the behaviour and attitudes of their subjects. To make sense of these initiatives, Elshimi draws on Foucault’s notion of the “technology of the Self”, arguing that they work via broader processes of governance, discipline and normalisation. Elshimi makes a novel contribution to critical literatures on radicalisation by moving the focus away from terminological debates and the exploration of pre-emptive risk governance (Baker-Beall, Heath-Kelly, and

Jarvis 2014; Heath-Kelly 2013b) and towards the lesser studied (and surreptitiously present) deradicalisation programs in our midst.

Despite the centrality of subjects to the radicalisation/deradicalisation agendas of counterterrorism in the neoliberal age, a defining feature of contemporary security governance is its de-personification. Critical Terrorism Studies rarely addresses the systems fetish found within Critical Infrastructure Protection and resilience policies, nor the academic reception of this systemisation in fields of Geography (Adey and Anderson 2012; Coaffee 2009) and Critical Security Studies (Aradau 2010; Burgess 2007; Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams 2011). Marijn Hoijtink contributes an article which explores European transport security and the performance of mobility as a value to be protected. She utilises a narrative approach, in places, to highlight the ambiguities she witnessed when attending multiple meetings of the EU's SECUR-ED project, where high technology and systems were fetishised and yet governmental representatives admitted they had no intention of purchasing such technology given its price-tag. The distance between the performance of high-technology and the gritty realities of urban transport (the developers foresaw use to combat graffiti artists; the technology could not distinguish between terrorist attacks on trains and birds flying past) is often highlighted in Hoijtink's article, illuminating the distance travelled in the contemporary neoliberal security age.

The final article in this section, by Robert Young, explores the importance of media consumption in the (re)production of public experiences and understandings of warfare. To do this, Young points to the constitutive importance of the video game *Splinter Cell: Blacklist*: drawing, in part, on analysis of his own emotions and experiences while participating in the game. Focusing, in particular, upon depictions of violence, identity and space in this game, Young argues that *Splinter Cell: Blacklist* works both to problematise and reproduce assumptions around the conduct and ethics of warfare. The game's importance, for him, is therefore its scope as a vehicle through which to challenge "conceptual myths" central to the post-9/11 war on terrorism.

### **Practitioners and vernacular perspectives from the front line of neoliberal counterterror**

In the final section of our special issue, we turn towards the experiences of subjects in the War on Terror: particularly from practitioners and vernacular perspectives. The penultimate article of this issue – by James Fitzgerald – develops Young's autobiographical efforts to recount his own engagement with terrorism. While Young's analysis focuses on encounters in popular culture, however, Fitzgerald turns his eye to those "petty sovereigns" responsible for policing and protecting the UK's borders. Describing his experience of being stopped, questioned and subsequently released following identification of literature related to terrorism within his hand luggage at Heathrow airport, Fitzgerald argues that autoethnography represents a fantastically useful technique for exposing and unpacking the human stories behind counterterrorism statistics – by, for example, contrasting the content of his specific experience with others treated less benignly in terms of the (re)production of academic privilege in surprising environments.

Finally, in the last contribution to the special issue, Asim Qureshi, Research Director at the London-based human rights advocacy organisation CAGE, offers a practitioner's perspective on the real world effects of counterterrorism policy on Muslim communities in the United Kingdom. Qureshi highlights the specific case of Umm Ahmed, a young woman of Muslim origin, who due to a set of unfortunate circumstances found herself

convicted of a terrorism offence without ever being involved in or having committed an act of terrorism. Indeed, the case of Umm Ahmed is emblematic of Jackson's aforementioned "epistemological crisis of counterterrorism" in the sense that, although the judge in the case accepted that she was in no way motivated or driven by "extremist ideology", he subjected her to participation in a "deradicalisation" programme as part of the "rehabilitation" process for her "crime". For Qureshi, the case of Umm Ahmed, alongside many other similar stories, can be understood as a consequence of the official governmental endorsement of an "anti-Muslim" narrative that portrays certain aspects of Muslim identity as a potential threat to the United Kingdom and to British values. By this, he means the assumption that there is something peculiar about being a British Muslim that makes individuals who correspond to that identity more susceptible to "radicalisation". Importantly, by drawing our attention to this case, Qureshi demonstrates how terrorism conviction statistics are not just artificially inflated but actively produced by the authorities.

## Conclusion

As the above suggests, the articles collected in this issue tackle the imbrication of terrorism and neoliberalism in a myriad of ways. This is a nexus that can be approached through a variety of research methods, from autoethnographic expressions of narrative writing through to genealogical excursions into the progenitors of our current folk devils. This is possible, in part, because the relationship (if it is such a thing) is one that becomes manifest via a range of encounters – including at national borders, in video games, as well as with the police and criminal justice system. While different articles in this issue emphasise divergent aspects of neoliberalism's political, economic and strategic logics, they share an important attempt to render visible and to contest. Perhaps, in so doing, they pull apart the construction of the contemporary academic as the ultimate non-threatening, non-radical figure (re)produced in James Fitzgerald's experience at Heathrow airport (Fitzgerald 2015, this issue).

If we might be permitted a brief autobiographical note of our own on which to finish, this Special Issue represents the final moment in our efforts at co-convening BISA's Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group. This experience has been an immensely rewarding one, and one that would have been far less enjoyable without the support of many friends and colleagues. To this end, we conclude this editors' introduction by gratefully acknowledging all those who have helped with, provided funding for, attended, contributed to, or otherwise assisted in the events we have organised under this group's auspices. And, to express our gratitude to Richard Jackson for his continuing support for the group and our efforts. Finally, we wish the new conveners of the working group the best of luck for their terms, and we look forward to the exciting new directions planned for the group!

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Notes

1. It should also be noted that other important works address the connection between the emergence of neoliberalism and practices of state terrorism/imperialism in previous eras, such as Naomi Klein's *The Shock Doctrine* (2007) and Ruth Blakeley's *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (2009).

2. According to George, if you are in the top 20 percentile of earners, you will gain economically from neoliberalism, gaining gradually more the higher up the income bracket you progress, whereas if you are in the bottom 80 percentile of earners, you will lose economically from neoliberalism, losing progressively more the further down the income bracket you fall.
3. Mark Neocleous' article is reproduced in this Special Issue in the form of a lecture "as spoken", as it was presented at the Annual Critical Studies on Terrorism Working Group Conference.

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